

# APPENDIX IV

## GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION AND PROTECTION OF HISTORIC WAGON TRAILS

Unlike prehistoric resources, historic resources frequently have documentary verification. This is especially true of historic trails. Most of the nationally and locally significant trails have their routes and uses documented. However, this type of documentation (i.e., written records and sources) cannot convey a trail's present environmental setting or the physical evidence of its historic usage. An understanding of environmental setting and physical evidence of historic usage requires an on the ground inspection of the area in question.

Trails present a complex cultural resource management situation because of their varying degrees of preservation and diverse range of environmental settings. While many trails in Wyoming possess some degree of historic significance (either national, regional, or local), not all segments of these trails are eligible for or should be included on the National Register due to varying degrees of compromised integrity. It is the policy of the BLM in Wyoming to preserve the best known representative examples of significant historic trails for the benefit of the American people. When segments of a documented significant trail taken in whole, exist in varying states of preservation or integrity, those portions of the trail exhibiting the least impairment of physical and environmental condition will be considered eligible for the National Register. (See Evaluative Questions Concerning Eligibility Section for guidelines on determining environmental and physical integrity.)

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to any field survey in the vicinity of a trail (as evidenced through a file search), the cultural resource contractor will review GLO plat maps, aerial photographs, and consult with the BLM District or Resource Area archeologist. The contractor will also review the comprehensive management plan and appropriate BLM resource management plan if the trail is part of the National Trails System to determine previously identified management goals.

All trails and each segment of those trails which may be affected by a project will be addressed in the report as distinct entities and recorded as separate cultural sites. Combining discussions and the grouping of trails in a report when the historical significance of these trails is related to totally different broad patterns of events is not acceptable (e.g., intermingling discussions of the Overland and Cherokee Trails). Each trail discussion will be treated as a discrete entry.

Whatever the given buffer zone, the trail segment(s) will be evaluated by a historian (other than those trails already determined eligible for the National Register) if the area evinces historic use, maintains a high degree of physical and environmental integrity, and will be impacted by a proposed action.

The District Manager may, at his discretion, maintain a buffer zone around ineligible segments if these lie adjacent to eligible segments and might be affected by a proposed action.

The recreational value of a trail segment will not be a factor in evaluating a trail segment for the National Register. However, the District Manager will consider the recreational value of the trail in the decision making process, and hence may wish to maintain buffer zones, authorize modern vehicle traffic, and set aside certain trail segments for recreational purposes.

Some trails (e.g., Oregon, Overland) traverse two or more BLM Districts. In some situations, differences of opinion between District might exist over the eligibility of such a trail in response to a linear project which crosses District boundaries. Such conflicts, when they cannot be worked out by the affected District, will be resolved by the State Director.

### TRAIL SEGMENT ELIGIBILITY

Significant trail ruts, swales, and associated sites which can be placed in historic context, and which have not suffered a loss of physical and environmental integrity, will be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Paved roads will be considered ineligible for the National Register.

An area verified by documentary evidence to have once been within a significant trail corridor, but in which no physical remains are now visible,

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will generally be considered ineligible for the National Register, unless a strong case can be made based on other significant evidence such as associated structural remains or diagnostic artifacts. excellent environmental integrity, or close continuity between adjacent segments.

There are a number of situations in which the evaluation of significance of a trail segment is not simple and straightforward. Hence, the veracity or accuracy of historic documentation may be subject to question and different aspects of physical or environmental integrity may be in varying states of preservation. For example, well defined ruts might be flanked or crossed by paved roads, two-tracks, or jeep roads; or the area adjacent to a swale might be laden with modern intrusions. In those situations where the eligibility of a trail segment is not clear, a case should be made for or against eligibility by addressing the questions in the following section. We strongly recommend that all three elements (historical significance, environmental integrity, and physical integrity) be present for a trail segment to be considered eligible for the National Register, especially trails having only state and local significance. However, there may be cases when only two of the three elements might exist for eligibility to be recommended (for example, when a documented significant trail segment lacks physical integrity, but still maintains excellent environmental integrity or when a trail segment maintains good physical integrity, but lacks environmental integrity, or possible certain segments of National Historic Trails).

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY

The following section is provided as a guide to the field contractors and BLM District Offices in assessing the eligibility of trail segments when eligibility is not clearly established and cannot be immediately determined.

Historical Significance and Use

- Is the trail part of the national Trails System Act of 1968 (i.e., Oregon Trail and Mormon Trails)?
- Does the trail have national, regional, or local historical significance?
- How reliable and extensive are the documented sources? What level of effort was expended to reach this conclusion?

- Has use of the trail been sporadic or ongoing to the present?
- How much use of the trail can be documented? (The expectation of remains will be related to the amount of use.)

ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

- Is the immediate landscape of the trail repre- sentative of or giving an overall impression of the original setting? Can the historical association be recalled?
- To what degree have modern intrusions, such as well pads, pipelines, access roads, fence lines, reservoirs, etc., compromised the environmental integrity? Are they dominating or easily overlooked?
- To what extent have natural erosional processes impacted the environmental setting?
- If the trail is part of the National Historic Trails System, how does the management plan evaluate the environmental integrity of the segment?

PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

- What types of physical evidence are observable (ruts, parallel sets of ruts, swales, vegetation changes, artifacts, associated fire hearths, associated structures and foundations, inscriptions, rust stains on cobbles, etc.)? What is the integrity of these remains?
- Are other nearby segments of the trail better preserved?
- Do the aerial photos exhibit any evidence of trail remains?
- Has the evidence been compromised through blading, ditching, crowning, paving, etc.? If so, to what extent?
- Does the physical evidence display enough of the original appearance and the associated artifacts the proper characteristics to recall the historical association?
- If a two-track with light use is associated with the trail remains, has it compromised the integrity or is it actually lending itself to preserving the trail?

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- - If the trail is part of the National Historic Trails System, how does the management plan evaluate the physical integrity of the segment?

## MITIGATING EFFECTS

The following measures, where applicable, are offered as suggestions to managers and cultural resource contractors in dealing with mitigation of trail remains:

- Avoid impacts to all physical remains with good integrity.
- Avoid impacts to locales with good environmental integrity.
- Cross the setting where the integrity of setting has already been compromised.

- Avoid running a linear project parallel to a trail.
- Cross at 90o using a dog-leg or S-curve.
- Relocate the proposed disturbance where it will be less visible from the trail (i.e., behind a rise.)
- Restrict the width of a working right-of-way within a visual buffer on either side of a trail.
- Avoid any blading on a right-of-way within the buffer zone if a track can do the job.
- Consider special rehabilitation measures (such as revegetation which will help re-establish the integrity of the trail.
- Consider special interpretive measures (such as signing) which will help mitigate the impact of the project.

- Consider special preventive measures (such as fencing) to reduce the area affected by the project.